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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3807

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June 4, 2006

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
The Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Hastert:

On Friday, 17 Canadians were arrested and charged with plotting to attack targets in Ontario with ammonium nitrate fertilizer bombs. When combined with various fuels, ammonium nitrate can be used to create powerful improvised explosive devices, including those used in several international terrorist incidents and in the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Canadian officials made the arrests last week after the group attempted to acquire as much as three tons of ammonium nitrate – the Oklahoma City bombing, in which 168 people died, was performed with only about one ton of ammonium nitrate.

Although Canadian officials said there is no evidence the suspects were targeting the United States, they acknowledge that the full scope of the group's plans are still unknown. The FBI confirmed that there may have been a relationship between some members of the Canadian group and two men from Georgia recently arrested for suspected surveillance activities in Washington, D.C. – further evidence that home-grown terrorists could be collaborating with cell outside of the United States. In light of these facts, combined with the continued threat of home-grown terrorists seeking to commit terrorist acts against vital American targets and the ease in which massive amounts of ammonium nitrate can be acquired largely undetected, I urge you to place the **Secure Handling of Ammonium Nitrate Act (H.R. 3197)** before the full House for a vote.

The Secure Handling of Ammonium Nitrate Act is a bipartisan piece of legislation I sponsored that would authorize the Department of Homeland Security to regulate entities and individuals that produce, sell or distribute ammonium nitrate-based fertilizer. Only those registered with the Department would be able to legally access ammonium nitrate, and retailers would be required to keep records of its sale for at least three years. The Department would monitor these records and violators would be subject to a fine of up to \$50,000 per violation.

The House Committee on Homeland Security has already unanimously voted to move this legislation to the House floor for a vote, and a similar measure was introduced in the Senate by Appropriations Chairman Cochran.

While the Department of Homeland Security and our intelligence services have been actively working with the Canadian government on this and other anti-terrorism cases, this is not enough. Each year, ammonium nitrate is sold in the United States without much of an understanding about its intended use or buyer. It is very likely that a terrorist cell seeking to recreate the devastation wrought by the Oklahoma City bombing can do so without much deterrence. Congress can do its part by immediately passing this legislation to help block terrorists' access to ammonium nitrate fertilizer.

Sincerely,

CURT WELDON
Member of Congress